

Inquiry Guide



Our Living Languages exhibition



While you are in the gallery:

- THINK** As a group, think about the questions posed in this guide.
- LOOK** Find any connections to the questions in the gallery.
- TALK** Talk about what you have found.
- DO** Record what you find out on the inquiry page.
- FEEL** Find your own personal connection to the messages.



FIRST PEOPLES'
CULTURAL COUNCIL

Our Living Languages:
Welcome



YOU ARE HERE

KEY QUESTION

When visiting the Royal BC Museum, who's traditional territory are we standing on?

Spend a moment watching the Lekwungen welcome video.

You probably noticed that there were words floating up at the beginning of the video. These are some of the original place names of this area now called Victoria. While these place names still have meaning for First Nations people today, why do you think new place names were given, such as James Bay and Fernwood?



My name is Siemthlut (Michelle Washington) and I can welcome you into witness the work here in *Our Living Languages*, but like most others who call Victoria home, I am a visitor from another nation. Our ancient teachings are very clear that I cannot welcome you to this territory because I am in the land of the Songhees and Esquimalt peoples who have spoken the Lekwungen language connected to this place for thousands of years.

FACTS

NOT JUST A SINGLE WAY

More than half of all Canada's Aboriginal languages are spoken in British Columbia. There are 34 distinct languages and 61 dialects.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The languages in British Columbia cross the US and Alberta borders because they existed thousands of years before provincial and international borders were in place.



Our Living Languages:
Diversity



YOU ARE HERE

KEY QUESTION

What makes one language different from another?

Look at all the different Welcome posts. Spend some time pressing the greetings and find ways that each is unique.

Now pick one post that you connect with. It could be because it is your language or a language from your area. It could even be that you like the way the greeting sounds.

Write the greeting and language in the box below

Is the greeting hard or easy to say?
 Greet someone beside you.
 Remember it and use it later.

Do you notice how all of the Welcome posts are different colours? Each colour represents a specific language family. Each language is distinct within a language family, but connected through a shared history.

What language family is your post part of? _____

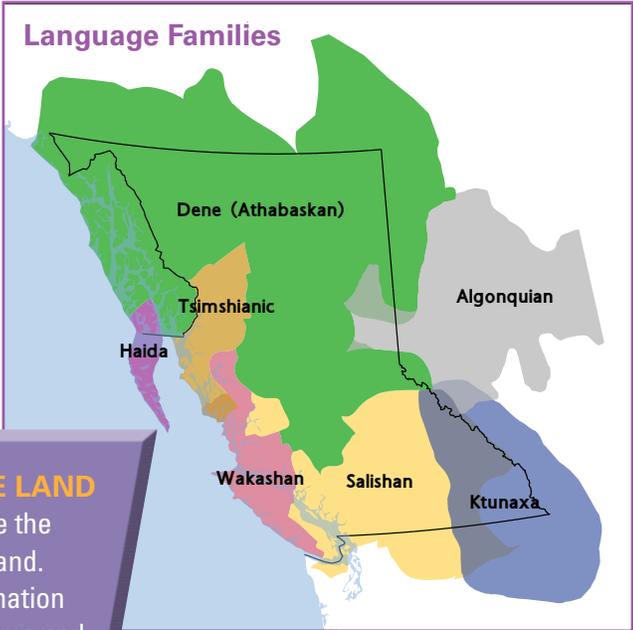
Find your chosen language on the exhibit map. Explore the map to find out how many communities speak this language. _____

FACTS



ORTHOGRAPHY
 You'll notice that language groups have their own writing systems.

CONNECTIONS TO THE LAND
 First Nations languages are the original languages of this land. They contain critical information about the history, ecosystems and geography of the region.



Our Living Languages:
Disruption



YOU ARE HERE

KEY QUESTION

After spending time reading the disruption text panels, what were you surprised by or what do you still have questions about?

Having the courage to ask questions is vitally important, and being open to hearing honest responses is equally important. For example:

What is respectful terminology when addressing First Nations?

Isn't this all ancient history?

The disruptions to First Nations language are not all in the deep past. Most First Nations in Canada still live under separate Indian Act legislation; the Crown still holds title to reserve lands; sacred sites continue to be destroyed; the last residential school closed in 1996; a staggering over-representation of First Nations children are in foster care and First Nations adults are in prison.

Terminology in reference to the First People's of North America has changed over the years. Let's break it down. **First Nations** and **First Peoples** are terms unique to Canada and refers specifically to established groups of people indigenous to place and territory through distinct nationhood, language, political structure and culture over thousands of years. **Aboriginal** also includes Inuit and Metis.

SELF-IDENTIFICATION
 Most individuals today identify themselves as being from the specific nation they have descended from and not the generalized terms used by historians and governments of the past.

FACTS

DID YOU KNOW
 Many people today still recall arrests for practicing culture, not having the right to vote and segregation in public establishments and transportation.

MISNOMER
 Indian is a term retained from when early explorers mistakenly thought they landed on the subcontinent of India. This archaic word is still legally used by the federal government to enact legislation for those registered as status Indians. It is not a preferred reference in any other instance and is considered derogatory by many.

Our Living Languages:
Resilience



YOU ARE HERE

KEY QUESTION

While exploring the exhibition, what area do you feel most connected to and why?

This exhibition incorporates the work of many cultural experts from around the province who gave their time and knowledge to transmit their culture to current and future generations.

Below are a few examples from the exhibition:



How would you describe this to a friend?

How does this make you feel?

Why do you think this was created?

What connection can you make from your own life?

Our Living Languages: Call to Action



YOU ARE HERE

KEY QUESTION

How can we all find ways to be respectful to each other's culture?

Envision Here!

How would you express and communicate this message of a respectful and inclusive society to your own circle of friends?

Before you go!

Choose an animal on the animal wheel, and then find out how to pronounce that word by using the First Voices computer station.



Time is the most precious gift that you can give to another person. Thank you for sharing your time and teachings with us on this journey together.

